



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on HB 1377

North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Casey Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief  
February 9, 2023

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Casey Anderson, Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in opposition of HB 1377.

Party hunting is the act of harvesting deer for a certain number of individuals hunting together where anyone can shoot the deer as long as someone in the party has an unfilled tag for that deer. This practice is implemented in other states to increase harvest and because it has become the culture of hunting in that state. Most states which allow party hunting issue deer tags through an ‘over the counter’ process where everyone can receive a tag. In North Dakota, our culture, including the approach to deer management, is much different than these other states. We have a lottery for deer gun tags and in most years, supply does not meet demand. For example, in 2022, we had 64,200 licenses available of which 11,971 went to gratis (landowner), leaving 52,229 lottery deer licenses available for 73,654 applicants. Drawing a lottery tag in some units is already extremely difficult and allowing party hunting would undoubtedly increase the number of individuals who would apply. Party hunting would also increase the overall harvest success as more people (hunters) would be more apt to be in the right place at the right time. Over time, the Department would likely have to issue fewer licenses to make up for the increase in harvest rates caused by party hunting. In the end, this would create a general loss in hunting opportunity. Party hunting also has the potential to increase the odds of wanton waste by over harvesting for the number of tags available because all members won’t necessarily know if a deer has been harvested or not. North Dakota’s deer population is in a rebuilding mode, with pressures from disease and winter as well as reduced habitat. Party hunting would only add to these pressures on an already limited opportunity.

Also, this bill, as written, does not exclude archery hunters and youth hunters from using party hunting with their license. It also requires a valid “combination license” to party hunt. I am not sure on the intent of this language, but currently you only need a certificate and general game and habitat license along with a deer tag to legally hunt deer in ND. Finally, this bill does not define “member” of the party or what “participating” entails.

For these reasons the Department would ask for a do not pass recommendation from this committee.